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ABSTRACT

This report examines the balance that exists between school-based management mandates and the superintendent's ultimate responsibility for student performance in Texas. It claims that the literature on school-based management stipulates that states must transfer authority, responsibility, and accountability from the central office to the school level. This assumption has implications for the role of the superintendent, central office, staff, principals, and teachers. To examine this transfer, a school district in Texas with a student population of over 10,000 students, with a reputation for having adopted a decentralized approach to school management, and where the superintendent has been in office for over 3 years, was chosen for study. Analysis reveals that balancing school-based management with ultimate school-district responsibility was a complicated issue. In the case study, the superintendent was able to manage and balance the devolvement of authority, responsibility, and accountability to the campus level while still maintaining ultimate responsibility, demonstrating that what supported this balancing act was the superintendent's clearly articulated vision that permeated the organization, an organizational structure that he helped develop to support school-based management. The superintendent displayed an unusual amount of trust for members of the organization, trust that was reciprocated. (Contains 55 references.) (RJM)

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Superintendent leadership for accountability in a site-based decision making context: A balancing act

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Superintendent leadership for accountability in a site-based decision making context: A balancing act

Introduction

Restructuring America's schools has been a common battle cry for politicians, economists, and educators over the past two decades. Although there is disagreement about the specific pieces to the restructuring puzzle, there does appear to be some agreement that schools should be the primary unit of improvement and that the decentralization of school governance is a key process for facilitating this improvement (David, 1989; Malen, Ogawa, & Kranz, 1990; Murphy, 1991; Ovando, 1994). Decentralization is supported in theory by the belief that when decisions are placed at the level closest to the product or client, in this case the students, then decisions and outcomes will improve (Hill & Bonan, 1991; Murphy, 1991; Wohlstetter, Smyer, Mohrman, 1994). This theory has been the foundation for decentralizing school governance as a means for creating school-based management systems where parents, teachers, and principals have decision-making authority in order to facilitate school improvement.

There is disagreement, just as there was with decentralization, on the key components of school-based management. Some authors (Wohlstetter, Smyer, & Mohrman, 1994) believe that the use of school-based management to describe systems where decentralization has occurred is in fact a misnomer. Wohlstetter, Smyer, and Mohrman (1994) indicated that involvement in decision making is the key component as opposed to management of the system; therefore, the name does not fit the description. Other authors agree that shared decision making is one component of school-based management; however, other components such as shifting authority, responsibility, and

accountability to the school level are also implied (Hill & Bonan, 1991; Malen, Ogawa, & Kranz, 1991; Murphy, 1991; Norton, 1996; Wagstaff & Reyes, 1993). In short, the assumption that school-based management has several key components, to include shared decision making and devolving authority, responsibility and accountability to the school level, is the underlying framework for this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the balance that exists between school-based management mandates and the superintendent's ultimate responsibility for student performance in the state of Texas. The transfer of authority, responsibility, and accountability from the central office level to the school level must take place according to the literature surrounding school-based management. This assumption has implications for the role of the superintendent, central office staff, principal, and teachers within the educational system. For this study, however, the superintendent and the central office staff were the primary focus.

Significance of the Study

In 1990, Malen, Ogawa, and Kranz conducted a case study of the literature on school-based management. They concluded that most of the research on school-based management was in the form of written project statements, status reports, and position papers. Malen et al. (1990) further indicated that of the 200 documents reviewed, only eight were systematic investigations of school-based management. And, the 8 systematic investigations utilized sampling and methodology that was problematic (Malen, Ogawa, & Kranz, 1990).

Several authors have concurred with Malen, Ogawa, and Kranz's findings on school-based management and have added the fact that few studies have specifically focused on the role of the superintendent and central office staff (Duran, 1994; Hill & Bonan, 1991; Johnson, 1996; Kowalski & Oates, 1993; Wagstaff & Reyes, 1993; Weiss, 1991). The literature that does focus specifically on the superintendent or central office staff tends to be advocacy or descriptive pieces, instead of empirical studies.

The literature on school-based management does, however, present the argument or recognition that the superintendent and central office staff are important in the implementation and continuation of school-based management (Kowalski & Oates, 1993; Noake, 1996; Reed, 1990; Wagstaff & Reyes, 1994; Wohlstetter, Smyer, & Mohrman, 1994). Others implied the importance of superintendents and central office staff in school-based managed systems by describing ways that they can act as barriers to the implementation process (Johnson & Pajares, 1996).

For example, Johnson and Pajares (1996) conducted a three-year longitudinal study of school-based managed schools. Factors that support and constrain the school-based management process were examined and identified. The authors found that superintendents and central office staff were viewed as constraining factors and were described as unsupportive, uncommitted, intrusive, and authoritarian throughout the process of implementation (Johnson & Pajares, 1996). This study, while painting a negative picture of superintendent and central office support of school-based management, provided further evidence that the role of the superintendent and central office staff in the implementation and continuation of school-based management needs further review.

A limited amount of literature does exist, however, that offers a framework from which to view the changing role of the superintendent in the arena of school-based management. For example, Kowalski & Oates (1993) depicted the changing role of superintendents in terms of three forms of leadership: instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and visionary leadership. Although there is a good deal of literature supporting each form of leadership individually, Kowalski and Oates (1993) proposed that superintendents must have all three forms of leadership skills in order to support the effective implementation of school-based management. However, specific analysis of how the different forms of leadership are orchestrated in districts that have successfully and effectively implemented school-based management was not addressed. Therefore, there are still many unanswered questions surrounding this issue.

Other unanswered questions surrounding the superintendent and central office staff in relationship to authority, responsibility, and accountability have also surfaced in the literature. This is due in part to the fact that school-based management calls for the shifting of decision-making authority to the school site level in order to increase school responsibility and accountability for student outcomes (Malen, Ogawa, & Kranz, 1990). Yet, there appears to be a lack of consensus as to the definition of authority, how much should be given to the school site, and who has the ultimate responsibility for student outcomes (David, 1989; Wholstetter, Smyer, & Mohrman, 1994). The fact that issues such as authority, responsibility, and accountability are still elusive concepts indicates a need for continued research in this area, as well as studying how these concepts relate to the superintendent and central office staff.

In short, there is limited empirical research surrounding the role of the superintendent and central office staff in school-based managed districts. Consequently, this study contributes to the practical knowledge base of the role of superintendents and central office staff in a district that has successfully adopted school-based management philosophies and practices. This study also expands the knowledge base surrounding the shift of authority, responsibility, and accountability from the central office level to the site-level.

Theoretical Framework

The need to understand the role of the superintendent in school-based management has been driven by the recognition that the superintendent is critical to the successful decentralization and shared decision-making process (Kowalski & Oates, 1993). Kowalski and Oates (1993) stated that the superintendent's role in school-based management lacked operational definition and clarity. As a result of this, Kowalski and Oates (1993) suggested a new paradigm of superintendent leadership that requires the combination of instructional, visionary, and transformational leadership (p. 383). Superintendents through effective communication, increased visibility, and a sense of high expectations demonstrate instructional leadership, according to Kowalski and Oates. Visionary leadership, on the other hand, was defined as the ability of the superintendent to develop a shared vision with members of the organization in order to build a climate of collaboration and commitment.

Transformational leadership was the final realm of leadership critical to the role of the superintendent in school-based management (Kowalski & Oates, 1993). Burns (1978) conceptualized transformational leadership as the development of individuals

within an organization in order to enhance performance and organizational growth. According to Johnson (1996), this requires leadership that "moves participants beyond dependent and calculated association to relationships of mutual commitment and interdependence" (p. 127).

Transformational leadership has also been described as consisting of four key factors: charisma, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspiration (Kirby & Paradise, 1992). Kirby and Paradise (1992) conducted a qualitative and quantitative study in order to determine the degree to which educational leaders demonstrated transformational behaviors and whether such behaviors could be linked to employee satisfaction. The authors concluded that transformational leadership could be found in public school education. Specifically, the transformational behaviors of individualized stimulation and consideration were cited the most. These transformational behaviors suggested that leaders were acting to provide opportunities for members of the organization to develop capacity, as well as challenge the status quo in favor of creativity and innovation. Such behaviors have been cited as necessary for transforming organizations into school-based managed systems (Herman & Herman, 1993).

Leithwood (1995) further defined transformational leadership by placing it into the context of the superintendent. Specifically, he described the following six dimensions of transformational leadership that are needed in the role of the superintendent:

1. Identifying and articulating a vision
2. Providing an appropriate model
3. Fostering the acceptance of group goals
4. High performance expectations

5. Providing individualized support

6. Intellectual stimulation (p. 329-331)

According to Leithwood, however, the research surrounding the reality of these dimensions in practice is limited. The research base surrounding the superintendent's role in transforming organizations through shared governance strategies is also limited (Kowalski & Oates, 1993; Norton, et. al., 1996; Wagstaff & Reyes, 1993). If the superintendent is ultimately responsible for restructuring schools in order to improve student outcomes, then additional research in this area will prove valuable.

Research Questions

With the purpose in mind, one primary research question served as a guide for this study:

1. How do superintendents balance ultimate school district responsibility with the promotion of school-based management?

Given that issues related to authority, responsibility, and accountability are embedded in the concept of school-based management, the following sub-questions supported the primary research question:

A. How do superintendents manage authority within a school-based management framework while still maintaining ultimate responsibility?

B. How do superintendents manage responsibility within a school-based management framework while still maintaining ultimate responsibility?

C. How do superintendents manage accountability within a school-based management framework while still maintaining ultimate responsibility?

Methodology

Inherent in the above stated research questions are issues of perception and meaning that different individuals within an organization have of the complex concepts surrounding school-based management. These issues of perception and meaning are bound by the context in which they are found because of the significant variations between implementation models of school-based management (Wagstaff & Reyes, 1993). Understanding issues surrounding assumptions, perceptions, and meaning of processes and structures appears to dictate a certain methodology (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Specifically, qualitative methods of research were utilized in order to study systematically and gain understanding of the interactions within the complex environment of a school district, reveal answers to the stated research questions, and support the overall purpose of this study.

There are several different types of qualitative research, however, Grounded Theory techniques and procedures are best suited to address the purpose and research questions that are driving this study (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Confidence in the use of qualitative methods for conducting research is growing (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Although qualitative methods have been criticized as lacking techniques, the emergence of Grounded Theory has added concrete methods for analyzing and conceptualizing data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Grounded Theory procedures and techniques have several strengths and have been described as a scientific

method that has precision, rigor, and verification (Stauss & Corbin, 1990). The use of Grounded Theory methodology for this study allowed the researcher to break through assumptions and perceptions in order to identify emerging categories and concepts in order to build a substantive theory about the phenomena being studied.

Another strength of Grounded Theory methods is that the procedures and techniques also allow for the phenomenon, in this case the superintendent in relation to school-based management, to emerge within the natural setting. The fact that this research took place in a natural setting and in close proximity to the actual situation or phenomenon, rather than through the mail or on the telephone, also prevented the influences of the local context from being stripped away (Miles & Huberman, 1994). And, given that a variety of school-based models have been implemented across this state, the issue of local context is an important one to consider (Wagstaff & Reyes, 1993).

The research problem and questions dictate the unit of analysis in a study (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The unit of analysis in this research project, therefore, was the superintendent. The superintendent/school district was selected based on the following criteria:

1. The district has a student population of at least 10,000 students.
2. The district has a reputation for having adopted a decentralized approach to school management.
3. The superintendent has been in office in this district for a minimum of three years.

Sampling

The superintendent and school district were selected based on the following criteria:

1. The district has a student population of at least 10,000 students.
2. The district has a reputation for having adopted a decentralized approach to school management.
3. The superintendent has been in office in this district for a minimum of three years.

The participants or samples in this study were purposively selected based on the assumption that they had access or knowledge of information related to the purpose of the study and, subsequently, the research questions. The individuals interviewed for this study were also required to have a minimum tenure of 10 years with District X. Requiring a minimum of 10 years would ensure that the individuals interviewed had knowledge of the district prior to and after the hiring of the current superintendent. Based on this sampling criteria; therefore, the following participants were initially interviewed:

One superintendent

Two central office staff: To include individuals who carry the title of assistant superintendent or director

Two principals: One high school or one middle school, and one elementary school

Two teachers: One teacher from each campus who participates in some capacity in school-based management (i.e., a member of a school or district -level decision- making council)

In using Grounded Theory techniques, selection of additional participants was premature during the early stages of the study (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Theoretical sampling was utilized, however, once the initial interviews took place. For example, it became obvious after the first round of interviews that the relationship between the school board and the superintendent was to play a role in this research. Thus, five of the seven board members were interviewed. The identification of further participants will take place in Chapter Four, however, information obtained in the initial interviews allowed for the selection of participants who maximized the opportunity for verifying the emerging categories, as well as relationships between categories (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Thus, this use of discriminate sampling continued until theoretical saturation of each emerging category was reached (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Procedures and Data Collection

Data Collection Instruments

The following data collection instruments were used in this study:

Interview guide.

The instrumentation for this study was comprised of four specific methods for collecting data. First, semi-structured interview guides were used to collect data during one-hour, face-to-face interviews with participants (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The protocol for the initial interviews contained the following open-ended questions:

1. Describe your professional history in education. (Warm-up question)
2. Describe your professional history in this district.
3. How do you define decision making in this district?

4. Describe the decision-making structures that exist in this district.
5. Who is involved in making decisions in this district?
6. How is participation encouraged?
7. In what area(s) (i.e. budget) is decision making encouraged?

This protocol was field-tested according to procedures described by Miles and Huberman (1994). The data derived from this initial interview protocol enhanced the theoretical sensitivity of the researcher and acted as a guide, not only for the selection of additional participants, but also aided in the development of the final interview protocols (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Observations.

The second instrumentation method used was that of observations to collect data. According to Adler and Adler (1994), the use of observations, when added onto other research methods, can add depth and breadth, as well as enhance consistency and validity to research. In this study, observations of school-based management councils, as well as administrative team meetings and board meetings took place. The observations were used to triangulate the data generated during the face-to-face interviews, as well as to search for any negative case information that could be used to test emerging categories (Adler & Adler, 1994).

Document analysis.

The third instrumentation method used in this study was the collection and analysis of documents. Documents have been defined as data other than those obtained during interviews or observations (Merrian, 1988). Like observations, documents can be used to supplement information gathered during the interview process (Finnegan, 1996).

Given the focus on the superintendent and school-based management, documents related to school board meetings, administrative meetings, and school-based management policies and procedures were collected.

Steps described by Merriam (1996) were then taken to determine authenticity and then the information was coded as described in the data analysis section of this chapter. In short, time and access to documents was a factor in utilizing the document analysis method; however, some documents were accessed and added depth to the emerging categories.

Memoing.

Memoing was the final method used for collecting and organizing data. Memoing, the process of writing records of analysis related to data collection and emerging categories, was used throughout the entire research process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Memoing aided in the development of emerging categories and also helped identify weak or missing areas in the research.

Data Collection Steps

Once a school district site was selected according to the previously established sampling criteria, contact was made via the telephone and an introduction letter. Once entry into the school district was approved, the initial interviews were scheduled. Data collection took place between September 1998 and December 1998. After the initial site visit and additional subsequent visits, audiotaped interviews were transcribed, memoing began, and documents or observation notes were coded and analyzed following the procedures established throughout the rest of this chapter.

Data Analysis

Coding.

The coding process began once data were collected during the initial site visit. Date, name of participant or event, and descriptive information necessary to aid in the analysis process was coded on all transcriptions, documents, notes, and memos. Transcripts of the interviews, as well as documents and observation notes were coded using the open-coding methods described in Strauss and Corbin (1990). Initially, the data was broken down into discrete pieces and then compared in order to identify similarities and differences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This process identified emerging categories and their properties and dimensions.

Once open-coding took place, the process of axial-coding was used in order to re-connect data by making connections between categories and subcategories. During this process, causal conditions surrounding the phenomenon of school-based management and the superintendent's role, as well as the context and conditions that bear on the phenomenon emerged (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The coding and analysis process began with the initial interviews and continued throughout and beyond the data collection timeline. The last coding process that led to the development of the final report or story was selective coding. This process entailed selecting the core categories that emerged in this study, relating it to the subcategories, validating the relationships with data, and then refining any categories that needed further development (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Quality Controls

Some qualitative researchers insist that the standards by which quantitative studies are evaluated are inappropriate for qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As a result of this, qualitative

research is increasingly judged to be "good science" if it meets criteria related to credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994), transferability, and verification (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Credibility.

The criteria for establishing credibility was met by the fact that the data collection took place over a four-month time period, participants, events, and documents were selected through theoretical sampling in order to ensure relevant data, and triangulation techniques were employed. Triangulation of data, the process by which findings are supported by showing multiple source agreement or lack of contradiction, were achieved by utilizing a variety of data collection methods. As mentioned previously, interviews, observations, and document analysis were used throughout this study. By looking at several sources and utilizing different methods of collection, the reliability and credibility of the findings was enhanced.

Looking for negative evidence or cases was another method used in order to increase the credibility of the findings in this study. Negative evidence or cases are instances when the emerging categories or hypothesis does not fit or hold up to the emerging pattern (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Negative cases that were discovered were compared with the emerging categories and necessary and appropriate adjustments were made so that the categories presented in Chapter Four are credible.

Transferability.

This study focused on a single school district site with the superintendent of that site being the unit of analysis. The local context of this school district is described in

Chapter Four, as well as the conditions that gave rise to the actions and interactions that pertain to the superintendent's role in school-based management. Theoretical sampling increased the depth of the data and added detail to the data collection and analysis process. Therefore, with issues of local context, setting, and conditions in mind, as well as following the data gathering and analysis procedures outlined previously, the results of this study may be generalizable to those specific situations only.

Verification.

Verification or confirmability are also components of quality research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Although previously mentioned, the use of triangulation and memoing are techniques that enhanced the verification or confirmability of the results of this study. Another technique for enhancing the verification of findings recognized by some qualitative researchers is that of maintaining an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994). For this study, list of codes, and data synthesis products are maintained in the appendix section of this report. Providing this information demonstrates a clear picture of the data collection and analysis process and should increase confidence in the findings.

Technology

HyperRESEARCH is a research software package that was used in this study. This program offered a code-and-retrieve technology that allowed for text searches with "auto-coding" of the finds. This program can also be used to conduct Boolean searches for in-document co-occurrences of codes. The theoretical implications and work of this study was in the hands of the researcher; however, the use of this technology assisted in managing the data in order to assist in the exploration and linking of theoretical concepts.

Limitations

The strengths of utilizing a qualitative approach in this study have been identified. However, a few limitations do exist that require acknowledgement at this time. For example, although interpretations were based on comprehensive data, the generalizability is still limited by the local context in which this study takes place. Generalizability across organizations that differ in size, goals, demographics, and internal and external structures have been criticized (Murphy, 1988). There are a variety of models of school-based management that have been adopted across the state of Texas and even across the nation. Therefore, the local context of the study will be clarified for individuals wishing to make generalizations will have the contextual information needed.

Findings

This study revealed that the ability of the superintendent from District X to be able to balance school-based management with ultimate school district responsibility was a complicated issue. Yet, this issue became clear as the data were pulled apart and then re-connected throughout the coding and analysis process. The re-connection of categories will be reviewed in the following section.

School-based Management and Ultimate District Responsibility

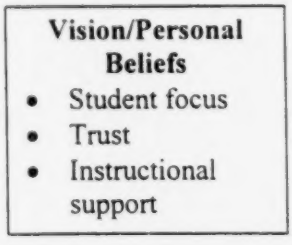
Findings suggest that the superintendent of District X was able to manage and balance the devolvement of authority, responsibility, and accountability to the campus level while still maintaining ultimate responsibility. The findings demonstrate that what supported this balancing act was the superintendent's clearly articulated vision that permeated all levels of the organization, the organizational structure that he helped

develop in order to support school-based management, and his relationship of support, trust, and respect with the school board of District X.

Vision.

Findings indicated that the superintendent displayed an unusual amount of trust for members of this organization. In fact, all respondents in this study specifically used the term "trust". The superintendent communicated trust, according to those interviewed, by supporting the decisions that were made at various levels of this organization. However, this trust was accompanied by high expectations. The superintendent clearly communicated, according to the respondents, that all decisions in this district were to be made based on what was best for students. In fact, all individuals interviewed stated that their jobs were solely based on how they supported instruction. It did not matter what level of the organization that the individual was working; all indicated that their whole purpose for having a job was to support instruction. The superintendent communicated this expectation to all members of the organization, according to those interviewed. In short, the superintendent appeared to have articulated a clear vision of trust and a focus on student needs to the members of this organization (See Figure 5.4 below).

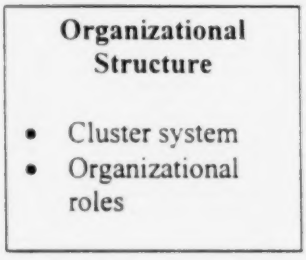
Figure 5.4: Research Question 1: Vision/Personal Beliefs



Organizational structure.

The superintendent's vision was supported by an organizational structure designed to better meet the needs of individual campuses, as well as students. As described in Chapter Four, District X was restructured into a four-cluster system as a result of the superintendent's leadership. Each cluster system had a high school, middle school, and feeder elementary schools. This reorganization appeared to have grown out of an understanding or vision that not all schools were the same; therefore, not all schools should be treated the same. As one respondent stated, the cluster system "individualized" the campuses in this district (Case 02.28). This system appeared to support the belief that individual campuses and cluster areas were in a better position to make decisions based on the needs of their own student population, instead of having to follow one district prescribed program (See Figure 5.5 below).

Figure 5.5: Research Question 1: Organizational Structure



Relationship with school board.

Reorganizing a school district, however, cannot occur without the support of a school board. And clearly, findings revealed that an essential ingredient to the superintendent balancing school-based management and ultimate responsibility was his relationship; as shown in Figure 5.6 below, with the school board of District X. Research has demonstrated that the superintendent-school board team is not always a productive

governance team (Goodman, Fulbright, and Zimmerman, 1997). Yet, this governance team has been cited as a key ingredient to the improvement of schools in this nation (Goodman, Fulbright, & Zimmerman, 1997). And, while many examples exist that demonstrate the destructive results of the lack of cooperation between a superintendent and his/her school board, the findings for this study presented a positive picture of this governance team relationship.

The participants in this study were all asked if and how the superintendent was able to balance ultimate district responsibility with the promotion of school-based management. Frequently, issues related to trust, support, and the cluster system were provided as answers to this question. Yet, what also emerged from responses were statements about the superintendent's relationship with the school board. This relationship was described as one based on mutual respect and trust between the superintendent and the board. According to the superintendent and the board members interviewed, this mutual trust and respect clearly did not exist between the former superintendent and the school board. Instead, it was built and nurtured as this governance team began to understand their roles and responsibilities in the educational process. According to Goodman, Fulbright, and Zimmerman (1997), "when boards and superintendents aren't conscientious in observing and respecting the distinctions in each other's roles, they court disaster" (p. 50). The superintendent and board of District X stated that this understanding of roles and responsibilities could be attributed to board member training and a clearly articulated communication system and process for superintendent-school board dialogue. This on-going dialogue, according to the

superintendent and the school board members interviewed, was the foundation to the trust and respect found between this governance team.

Figure 5.6: Research Question 1: Relationship with School Board

In short, this research demonstrates that the superintendent of District X, along with strong school board support, was able to articulate a clear vision based on trust and a continuous focus on student achievement. This superintendent, along with the school board, was able to create an organizational structure that demonstrated support for this vision; a vision that allowed for the devolvement of decision-making authority, responsibility, and accountability to all levels of this organization. Thus, the following figure 5.7 depicts the overall model of school-based management that was found in District X.

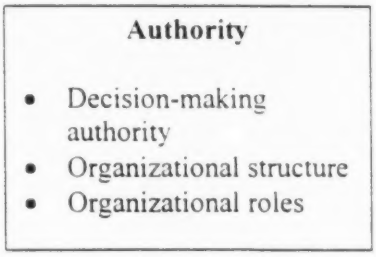
Authority.

The findings from this study clearly indicate that a devolvement of authority, responsibility, and accountability from the central office level to the campus level has taken place in District X. First, the devolvement of authority was evident at all levels of this organization starting with the school board and working across the organizational chart to the teacher level. In fact, the common theme in most respondents' definition of authority was the ability to say yes or no to a decision. Yet, this perception of having the authority to make decisions was perplexing given this district's definition of school-based management. For example, in policy, the school-based management committees (CPOCs) were described as advisory committees only. The principals, in fact, clearly maintained a veto power over decisions made in this committee. However, no examples emerged that indicated principals exerted this veto power. Instead, the findings demonstrate that the CPOC process was a collaborative one that included all stakeholders in the decision-making process for that particular campus.

The CPOC process was enhanced by the organizational changes made by the superintendent and school board of District X. Clearly the organizational structure or "cluster system" allowed for the devolvement of decision-making authority to various levels of this organization. Along with this change in organizational structure was also a change in organizational roles. The change in roles allowed for individuals who were once at the central office site, to be located on campuses in order to assist in the decision-making process needed to improve instructional conditions for students. In short, the superintendent of District X was able to manage authority by devolving decision-making authority, creating an organizational structure to support shared-decision making, and re-

defining roles within the organization in order to support school-based management (See Figure 5.1 below).

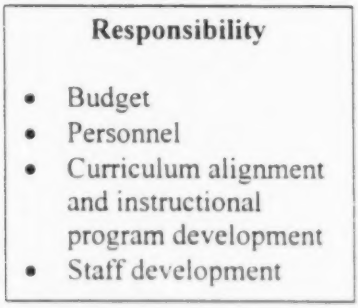
Figure 5.1: Sub-Question A: Authority



Responsibility.

The findings also demonstrate that members of this organization are empowered to make decisions that support the needs of students at the campus level. If all members interviewed perceived that they were empowered to make decisions, then what were those decisions? In other words, what responsibilities were actually devolved from the central office level to the campus level? According to literature on school-based management, the primary domains of responsibility typically devolved to the campus level are decisions related to the budget, personnel, and curriculum to a certain extent (Hill & Bonan, 1991). The findings demonstrate that decision-making responsibility in the areas of the budget, personnel, curriculum alignment and instructional program developement, and staff development are located at the campus level in District X (See Figure 5.2 below).

Figure 5.2: Sub-Question B: Responsibility



For example, principals and teachers now develop the campus budget based on student and instructional needs. This appears to be a change from previous years and previous superintendents. Past practice in this district was described by respondents as one where campuses were given an amount of money and told how to spend it. This clearly is not the practice in District X today.

The selection of personnel at the campus level is also an example of decision-making responsibility that now rests in the hands of the campus. Teachers, principals, and parents now make up the hiring committees for teaching and administrative positions at the campus level. In fact, no principal or assistant principal is hired now without the involvement of teachers. Past practice, once again, was described as very top down in this area. In fact, typically the superintendent and assistant superintendents would make principal decisions for campuses without the input of stakeholders.

Curriculum alignment and instructional program responsibilities were also presented as site-based decisions in District X. Curriculum in this district was described more in terms of instructional strategies and program decisions versus curriculum decisions. This was due to the fact that most individuals interviewed for this study

defined curriculum in terms of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) as opposed to a district developed curriculum. Other than the TEKS, however, there did not appear to be a standard delivery model, method, or program for curriculum or instruction in this district. It was stressed time and time again that each campus had the authority and responsibility to teach using whatever means necessary to improve student achievement.

And finally, staff development planning and implementation was also the responsibility of the campus level in this district. A staff development office or department does not exist in this district. The decision to devolve staff development responsibilities to the campus level, according to the superintendent, was due to his understanding that district imposed staff development was not effective. Instead, principals and teachers were identified as the key decision makers in this area because the superintendent believed that they were in the best position to know teacher, student, and campus needs. In short, the findings from District X clearly indicated that individuals at all levels of the organization perceived that they had the authority and responsibility to make decisions in the area of budgets, personnel, curriculum, and staff development in order to meet the needs of their student population.

Accountability.

The devolvement of accountability was also of interest in this study. And, all individuals interviewed for this study stated that they felt responsible and accountable for the success of students in this district. A strong sense of self-accountability for the success and failure of students was clearly articulated in this study. However, as the issue of accountability was further probed, two primary accountability systems emerged.

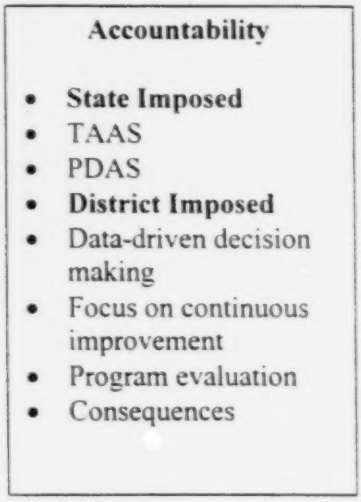
Specifically, state-imposed and district-imposed accountability measures are the primary focus of accountability in District X (See Figure 5.3 below). The state-imposed accountability measures were identified as the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test, the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), and the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS). In fact, the superintendent of this district, stressing a belief in the value of these measurements, implemented a data bank system where teachers, principals, and cluster directors could access individual teacher and student TAAS data from his or her desk. This provided an immediate sense of accountability for individuals in this district.

This study also focused on how the superintendent utilized these accountability measures, as well as other district measures in order to manage accountability in this district. The findings indicated that the superintendent articulated the following expectations in terms of accountability: decisions were to be data driven, decisions were to focus on student needs, and that all decisions for implementing new programs, activities, etc., were to include a clear evaluation component. Each individual interviewed for this study articulated that this was a clear focus in District X and that all members of the organization were held accountable for making decisions based on this criteria. Clearly individuals in this district felt empowered to make decisions, however, they also felt a strong sense of accountability to present data to support those decisions. For example, individuals were expected to present program ideas or budget decisions with the necessary data to support the cost effectiveness of the decision, as well as data on how this decision would support or meet student needs. And, once decisions were made and new programs were implemented, then a clear program evaluation model was

required in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. In short, program accountability was a clear focus and there was evidence to suggest a clear process for measuring this in District X.

A final piece to the accountability puzzle for this district was the issue of consequences communicated by the superintendent for lack of goal attainment in the area of student achievement. The term "consequence" was defined uniquely in District X. For example, when asked exactly how individuals were held accountable if goals were not attained in this district, the respondents in this study responded to this question by describing a network of support. Support is the primary consequence for lack of goal attainment in District X. For example, when asked to describe a time when student performance goals on TAAS were not met, each respondent stated that support was the primary consequence. Teachers and principals stated that the superintendent, executive directors, learning facilitators, and curriculum support staff would all be available for help or assistance if such a scenario were to occur on a campus. Each admitted that there would be questions and probing into possible causes of the drop in scores or the lack of goal attainment in a particular area; however, each indicated that this would be in the form of support instead of a reprimand. The interviews with the five board members and the superintendent all revealed the same data. In fact, there appeared to be a strong emphasis from the superintendent and the school board on support for improvements in the area of student achievement as opposed to reprimands and threats.

Figure 5.3: Sub-Question C: Accountability



In short, the superintendent of District X, according to the data, was able to manage and devolve authority, responsibility, and accountability to all levels of this organization while still maintaining ultimate responsibility.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

The findings from this study have several implications for the practice of educational administration and specifically the superintendent of schools. There are implications for organizational communication necessary when restructuring the organizational system in a district, for educational administration preparation programs, and for superintendent-school board training. The following section will highlight these implications.

Organizational Communication

The organizational structure in District X is an essential ingredient to devolving decision making to the campus level. However, there can be negative side effects to this

type of organizational structure. For example, several individual members of this organization indicated that communication was at times a challenge for District X. The cluster system, as described previously, divided the district into four cluster systems. And, while vertical alignment and communication was enhanced and strengthened, horizontal or across-district communication was a challenge. This challenge created situations in which there was a re-inventing of the wheel in terms of services or programs. Thus, districts must pay close attention to communication issues in order to avoid some of the negative side effects to this organizational structure.

Preparation Programs

The research for this study, while not focusing on ethics, demonstrated that ethical leadership based on a set of core values was a part of this district's success. For example, the superintendent, school board members, principals, and teachers frequently talked about a strong sense of trust and support in this district. The superintendent talked a great deal about trusting and empowering all individuals within the organization to do what was best for students. Embedded in their words were issues requiring ethical behavior in order to devolve trust to this degree at all levels of the organization. Yet, how do you develop this behavior? Do all aspiring superintendents leave administrative preparation programs with a clear understanding of the role of ethics in educational administration? Given the importance of ethical leadership, behavior, and decision making in this district, it seems appropriate for this to be a focus in all educational administration preparation programs.

School Boards

The relationship between the superintendent and the school board is critical to the success of school-based management in District X. This relationship is based on mutual trust and respect that was then modeled for other members of this organization. Yet, how did this governance team reach this point? According to the superintendent and board members interviewed, this was accomplished through a great deal of board training and superintendent-board communication. This training did not always come via a region center training or professional organization seminar. Instead, the board and the superintendent spent a great deal of time establishing a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities of this governance team, as well as a clear system for communicating concerns between members of this team. Clearly, canned presentations and training can teach about roles and responsibilities of board members; however, it seems that through retreats and a clear communication process that the governance team of District X was able to take this a step further. It seems that such practices take time, and time is a factor that many new superintendents feel they do not have. However, this study suggests that this relationship is key to the successful devolvement of decision-making authority, responsibility, and accountability to the campus level. And, that it is time well spent if it produces a governance team that models trust and respect for the rest of the district. Thus, districts will be well served if they allocate time and resources in order to create, nurture, and sustain a strong governance team.

Concluding Statement

This study provides an example of a district that successfully reorganized and restructured in order to support a vision of shared decision making and school-based

management. Additional studies on school-based management in other school districts of similar size and composition might contribute to a better understanding of how organizational structures can promote and sustain shared-decision making beyond the policy level and into practice.

School Boards

As mentioned previously, the superintendent-school board relationship was critical to the success of school-based management in District X. The importance of this relationship was stressed time and time again. Some even spoke of their fear of board member elections and what this could mean for this governance team. These fears appear justified given the turnover rate of superintendents when a new school board is elected to office. Therefore, additional research in the area of superintendent-school board relationships might provide suggestions and models for how to achieve or preserve a positive governance team after changes in membership take place.

Consequences for Achievement

While this study suggests that the consequences for lack of goal attainment are initially seen as support and encouragement. Greater understanding of this concept and how this method motivates individuals within organizations seems appropriate. There are numerous examples of how more punitive approaches also motivate individuals to attain goals. It seems that a great deal could be learned, however, by studying both approaches in the school district setting in order to determine effectiveness and longevity of both approaches in terms of motivation to achieve desired results.

Community and Parents

Information surrounding community and parent involvement in the school-based management process was not a focus of this research. However, when questions were asked about participants in the school-based management and shared decision making process, few ever mentioned parents. In fact, a few admitted that perhaps this was an area in need of additional attention in this district. This fact raises many questions about parent involvement in the shared decision-making process. For example, if shared decision making is devolved to the parent level, then how is accountability then devolved to this level as well? Although there is research available that speaks to the degree in which parents are feeling empowered in districts today, additional research in the area of accountability for decisions when parent and community members are involved in school-based management needs to be pursued.

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